REMARKS

This is in response to the official action dated September 3, 2002. Reconsideration in view of the following is respectfully requested.

Entry of this amendment after final is appropriate at this time. It is shown below that the prior art citations are not proper. The only rejections are based on Section 112, and those rejections have been readily dealt with above. Therefore, all rejections have been overcome and there are no new issues for the examiner to consider.

A new proposed drawing Fig. 1A, corresponding to the embodiment of claim 1, is attached. Upon approval by the examiner, a formal drawing will be submitted to the official draftsman. Support is found in original claim 1.

As to examiner's paragraph 3, claim 1 is amended to clarify that the term 'independent' means that the second spring is independent of the first spring. As to examiner's paragraph 4, claims 2 and 4 are amended to clarify the spring/damper element. It is noted that this definition was already present in the specification at page 7, paragraph 1, and is not a further narrowing of the claims. As to examiner's paragraph 5, the phrase 'may be connected' is changed to 'is connectable'. Therefore, the rejections under Section 112 are overcome.

Claims 1-5 and 8 stand rejected as being anticipated by Sick et al, US Patent No. 6213681. This reference is not prior art. The prior art date of the Sick patent is either the "102(e)/371" date (completion of US national stage requirements) of 2 November 1999 or the PCT publication date of 4 February 1999. However, applicant's filing date is the International application date of 15 April 1998, which is prior to either of the above dates. It seems that the examiner is relying erroneously on the nominal US filing date of 6 December 1999 (completion of US national stage requirements). This last date is not applicant's effective filing date. The effective filing date is the PCT filing date. Therefore, the rejection is not proper and should be withdrawn.

Wherefore, allowance of all pending claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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MARKED-UP CLAIMS

Claim 1 (~~twice~~ three times amended). Spring/mass vibratory force coupler with variable damping and variable spring stiffness for coupling masses to a reference mass, comprising a first mass coupled to a second mass via a first spring and ~~an independent~~a second spring, independent of the first spring, arranged in parallel, a damper arranged between the second spring and the first mass wherein a damping function of the damper may be varied based on an application of a voltage to an electrorheological or magnetorheological fluid contained therein.

Claim 2 (~~twice~~ three times amended). Device according to Claim 1, further comprising at least one absorber mass connected to the first mass by means of a first spring/damper ~~element~~element being a combination of a spring with a damper based on an electrorheological or magnetorheological fluid, which ~~may be connected~~is connectable to a voltage source.

Claim 3 (twice amended). Device according to Claim 2, wherein connection to a voltage source takes place by means of a coupling element based on an electrorheological or magnetorheological fluid.

Claim 4 (~~twice~~ three times amended). Device according to Claim 2, further comprising at least one auxiliary mass which is connected to the absorber mass by means of a second spring/damper element being a combination of a spring with a damper based on an electrorheological or magnetorheological fluid, which ~~may be connected~~is connectable to a voltage source.

Claim 5 (twice amended). Device according to Claim 4, wherein the spring/damper elements are a combination of torsion, coil or gas-pressure springs with dampers based on electrorheological fluids or magnetorheological fluids.

Claim 8 (three times amended). A method for modifying mechanical natural vibrations in machines, vehicle running gear or motors selected from the group consisting of balancing machines, machine tools, unbalance generators, testing machines, resonance testing machines, alternate-bending machines, screen conveyors, eccentric presses, crank mechanisms, vibration and resonance drives, vibratory gear mechanisms, internal combustion engines, electric motors and engine mounts which comprises coupling said machines, vehicle running gear or motors to a reference mass with the spring/mass vibratory force coupler of claim 1.

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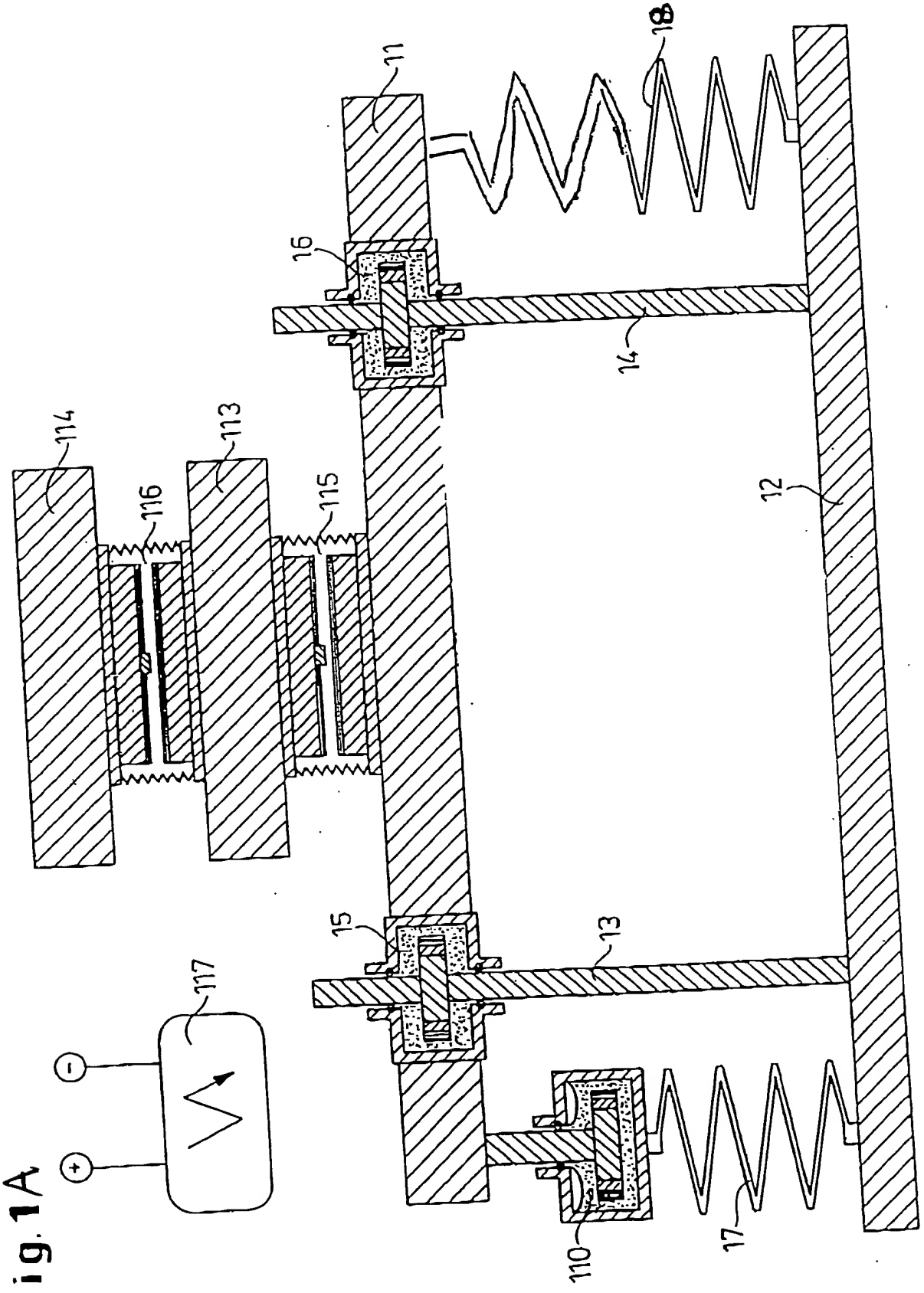

Fig.1A